DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 270 808 CS 209 904

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TITLE	Culture Clash: U.S. Television Programs in Korea.
PUB DATE	Aug 86
NOTE	27p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (69th, Norman, OK, August 3-6, 1986).
PUB TYPE	Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	College Students; *Cultural Differences; *Korean Culture; *Mass Media Effects; *Media Research; Moral Values; Sex Differences; Social Values; *Student Attitudes; *Television Viewing
IDENTIFIERS	South Korea

ABSTRACT

A study examined the influence that the United States media have on the values, morality, and traditions of other countries, and more specifically the effects on Korean values of American television as it is broadcast on the U.S. Forces Korean Network. College students in Seoul, Korea (46% male and 54% female with a mean age of 24.6) answered a questionnaire on television viewing habits. Males and females differed significantly in the amount of U.S. television they watched and in the implications of their viewing. Females were more likely to endorse nontraditional Korean viewpoints regarding roles, norms, and values. For males, the more they watched U.S. television, the more protective they became toward Korean culture, valuing the Korean over the U.S. family system and concerned that Western culture might "reduce Korea's cultural uniqueness." The findings suggested that heavy viewers of U.S. programs are more likely to take liberal positions on various social issues than are light viewers and that U.S. programs are contributing to the Westernization of traditional cultures. References and tables are appended. (SRT)

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International Division

CULTURE CLASH: U.S. TELEVISION PROGRAMS IN KOREA

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Presented to the International Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Conference, Norman, Oklahoma, August 1986.

CS 209 904

ABSTRACT

CULTURE CLASH: U.S. TELEVISION PROGRAMS IN KOREA

This study examines the cultural imperialism hypothesis that exposure to American media has influenced the values, morality, and traditions of other countries. The major purpose of this study is to determine whether U.S. television programs in Korea provide any clear conflict with traditional Korean values. A self-administered questionnaire was given in April, 1984 to 226 Korean college students in Seoul, Korea. College students were chosen because of their accessibility and because they are likely to watch U.S. television programs. The sample was 46% male and 54% female, and most respondents were in their 20's. Within the clear limitations of the sample and the measures, the findings suggested that heavy viewers of U.S. programs are more likely to take more liberal positions on various social issues than are light viewers. More importantly, the findings do suggest that U.S. television programs are contributing to the westernization of traditional cultures.

CULTURE CLASH: U.S. TELEVISION PROGRAMS IN KOREA

The United States remains the world's leading exporter of television programs by far, despite an increase in the amount of international exchange in the past decade (Varis, 1984). As the world's television metropolis, the U.S. each year sells between 100,000 and 200,000 hours of programming to other countries. Current estimates of the revenue from U.S. program sales abroad exceed half a billion dollars (Caranicas, 1984; Mermigas, 1985), or about 20 percent of total sales.

According to the trade press, international growth in new technologies such as cable and satellite has created a "significant increase in the demand for American TV product," and sales are "thriving" (Coates, 1985). Most of the "product" imported by other countries (which are seen as "markets") consists of entertainment. As Katz notes, however, "entertainment is <u>not</u> neutral but an active force in the communication of values" (1977, p. 117; see also Guback, 1984; Gerbner & Gross, 1976).

American entertainment programs dominate the ratings and the program schedules in many countries. This has generated a great deal of concern about the impact of these programs on the importing societies. The debate over this one-way flow has produced many heated arguments about cultural invasion and appropriate policy options but remarkably little empirical data about the consequences for the importing countries (see Gunter, 1974).

Schiller (1969, 1976), Tunstall (1977), and others have charged that American "cultural imperialism" is an instrument of economic power which reduces the cultural uniqueness of the importing societies. Chenchabi (1981) proposed that "cultural invasion" by the consumer society increases the frustration of a large majority of the population in Africa, Asia, and elsewhere. In particularly strong terms, Lomax (1977, pp. 125-126) argued that "a mismanaged, over-centralized electronic communication system is imposing a few standardized, mass-produced, and cheapened cultures everywhere," and Masmoudi (1979, p. 174) condemned American television programs as

> instruments of cultural domination and acculturation, transmitting to the developing countries messages which are harmful to their cultures, contrary to their values, and detrimental to their development aims and efforts.

Others, however, argue that cultural diffusion and the dynamic integration of foreign elements may have their benefits while cultural isolation is an illusion which results in squandered resources (de Sola Pool, 1977). Moreover, Katz et al. (1976) criticize the more drastic aspects of the media imperialism thesis, and suggest that such strong claims are overstated. Finally, it should be noted that some countries may actively seek and welcome the coming of Western mass culture, viewing the old ways as impediments to development and modernization.

Despite the intensity of the arguments, the actual impact of the unequal exchange on cultural values, beliefs, ethics, and

ideologies has been mostly either taken for granted or ignored. The debate has been characterized by anecdotes and measures of "information flow," and the almost total lack of data about actual effects. In this paper, we attempt to illuminate some possible consequences of cultural transfer, by investigating the contribution of American television programs to Korean college students' conceptions of social reality.

Previous Research

While scarce, existing empirical evidence about the effects of U.S. television programs in other countries provides somewhat contradictory findings. The possible impact of U.S. television has been explored most often in Canada (perhaps because of Canada's proximity to the United States), but mainly in terms of viewing patterns in Canadian border areas (Davey, 1975; Elkin, 1975; Nielsen and Nielsen, 1976; Scanlon, 1974; Searest, 1975). However, Sparkes' (1977) U.S.-Canadian study found very little (if any) attitudinal differences associated with exposure to foreign news programs.

In Taiwan, Tsai (1970) found that television-viewing children had a more favorable attitude toward elements of American culture and a less favorable attitude toward their own culture than did their non-viewing counterparts. More recently, Weimann (1984) surveyed 461 high school and college students in Israel, and found that heavy viewing was strongly associated with a "rosier," idealized perception of "living in America."

Pingree and Hawkins (1981) studied over 1,200 public school students from Perth, Australia. For Australian children, amount of exposure to U.S. television programs was found to be correlated with television-biased conceptions of reality about Australia, though not about the U.S. Finally, in the Philippines, Tan et al. (1985) found that high school students who frequently viewed American television programs tended to emphasize a non-traditional value (pleasure), and to de-emphasize some traditional values (salvation, forgiving, and wisdom).

On the other hand, research in Iceland conducted by Payne and Peake (1977) concluded that U.S. television has a minimal effect in generating favorable attitudes about the U.S., or in creating attitudes of fear, anger or sadness which Icelanders commonly associate with U.S. culture. Other conflicting examples from other countries are reported in Melischeck et al. (1984).

Some of the discrepancies in these studies may reflect the fact that different dependent variables are employed; some studies examine the influence of American television on images of the U.S., others look at images of the native culture, and still others deal with "traditional" values and beliefs. Furthermore, any effects of U.S. television programs may vary for different types of viewers (for example, in terms of age and education) in different countries. Variations in research settings may also play a role; the impact of American television programs need not be uniform across diverse cultures. All this clearly introduces numerous complicating or contaminating factors which make it difficult to isolate any generalizable effects of American

television on importing countries.

Aware of these limitations, the present study examines one small piece of this critical global puzzle. We are dealing with one country, Korea, a country that is very much unlike the U.S. in its traditions, history, morality, and values. Also, we are dealing with a small and specialized part of its population, college students who are learning English. And, we are dealing with exposure to U.S. television programs through one particular source, the American Forces Korean Network (AFKN).

Korean Television and AFKN

Koreans own close to eight million television sets, a penetration rate of 97.5 percent ("Global Media Profiles," 1985). The Republic of Korea has 78 television stations. Of these, 51 are connected to the government-run KBS network, and 21 are affiliates of the privately-owned, commercially supported Munhwa Broadcasting Company. The remaining six stations are part of AFKN, which is run by the U.S. military.

AFKN is an affiliate of the American Forces Radio and Television Service, and the second largest of five networks managed by the Army Broadcasting Service (American Forces Radio and Television Service [AFRTS], 1983). AFKN started operating in 1950, the first year of the Korean War. It began television broadcasting in 1957. Since then, its signal has come to reach the entire nation through a sophisticated cable and microwave system, although it still treats the American servicemen and their families as its primary audience (AFRTS, 1983; Lee, 1982). Our examination of the March 1984 AFKN TV Guide shows that AFKN

broadcasts 132 hours weekly, of which 80 hours consists of entertainment programs such as "The Tonight Show," "Hee Haw," "Three's Company," "M*A*S*H," "The Love Boat," "Dallas," and others. According to General Robert W. Sennewald, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Forces Korea, "No one organization in Korea contributes more to the quality of life than AFKN" (AFRTS, 1983).

Any possible impact of AFKN must be seen in the context of the larger political and cultural climate of Korea. Korea has been changed drastically since the "economic miracle" in the early 1970's, in which it became one of the United States' largest trading partners (Ashbrook, 1983). Trade with the U.S. has brought on a massive influx of Western culture. Accordingly, Korea now, in media terms, is suffering "cultural travail" in coping with the conflict between Western and Korean cultures. On the surface at least, there is a belief that the traditional values will survive the transformation. According to the Korean Overseas Information Service,

> Korea is a country blending change and tradition. In both the city and the countryside the appearance of Korea is changing with great speed but beneath this transformation of society is a stability born of centuries-old traditions and customs which while modified to fit a new society still have great meaning and powerful influence (Facts About Korea, 1981, p. 158).

Exposure to American media is one of the most increasingly visible signs of this "transformation within stability." Many young Koreans are listening to AFKN-FM (radio), which is

generally recognized for its fast delivery of pop tunes, and watching American programs on AFKN-TV. Journalists and scholars in Korea have been expressing concerns about the possible reduction of Korea's cultural uniqueness from AFKN viewing.

These concerns over the possible effects of AFKN programs have intensified since the Korean government in 1983 approved the connection of AFKN with SATNET, the U.S. Department of Defense Satellite Network. AFKN is now linked to the U.S. via satellite around the clock. SATNET programming comes from the American Forces Radio and Television Service Production Center in Los Angeles; approximately 40 percent of the AFKN program week is received in that manner ("Satellite Network to Expand," 1983).

Watching AFKN programs is of course likely to be only one small aspect of a larger process of Westernization. Nonetheless, the messages of American television programs present clear conflicts with many traditional Korean values. The influence of Confucianism of Korean thought and behavior has been immense, but it has been filtered by other influences to the point that

> it is difficult to tell what in Korean life is truly Confucian and what is not. People do not usually think of themselves as Confucian, though the natural Korean way to do things is largely the Confucian way. This is reflected in social life in the relations of family members, between 'seniors' and 'juniors', between men and women, and between friends. It is reflected in the hierarchy of social relations, in the respect felt toward the elderly, in the desire for education, in ceremonies to commemorate the

deceased, and in the continuing influence of the extended family, even though increasingly -- at least in the city -- the living unit is a nuclear family. Filial piety and patriotism are cardinal virtues taught all children (Facts About Korea, 1981, p. 158).

Thus, the central and critical differences between images portrayed on American programs and traditional Korean ideals are likely to revolve around perceptions of "proper" roles of men and women, of family values, and of respect for parents and elders. While American television portrayals may be seen as largely "traditional" and "conventional" within their own cultural context, they may appear vastly more liberal and progressive from the Korean perspective.

Methods

Our data explore the implications of these considerations based on a sample of Korean college students. A self-administered questionnaire (written in English) was given in April 1984 to 226 Korean college students attending English classes at the Hyun Dae Foreign Language Institute which is a well-known language institute in Seoul, Korea. The survey was conducted in classes over a two-week period. Trained instructors were present to answer any questions raised by respondents, although they did not reveal the specific purposes of the study. College students were chosen because of their accessibility and because they are likely to watch AFKN television programs regularly. Most private language institutes offer AFKN classes for instructional purposes, such as "AFKN-TV Listening

Comprehension," or "AFKN-TV News."

The sample is 46 percent male and 54 percent female. Most respondents are in their 20's. (A fifth are younger than 20 and a tenth are over 30; the mean age is 24.6 years). In terms of religion, 40 percent indicated they were "Christians," 18 percent Buddhists, 21 percent Catholics, and 21 percent "other."

Exposure to AFKN was measured with the question, "On an average day, how many hours do you spend watching AFKN-TV?". By American standards, exposure to AFKN is relatively low; less than 20 percent reported spending two or more hours viewing AFKN "on an average day." For some analyses, the sample was partitioned at the median, into light (less than an hour daily; 48 percent) and heavy (an hour or more daily; 52 percent) AFKN viewers. Viewing of Korean programs (or of American programs on Korean stations) was not measured.

Of the various demographic variables considered, AFKN viewing appears to be related only to sex, with females watching significantly more; 41 percent of males compared to 62 percent of females were classified as heavy AFKN viewers (gamma=.40, $p<.001$). Most respondents (65 percent) indicated they watched AFKN for instructional purposes ("to learn English"), rather than for entertainment, for information about the U.S., or for news. Also, most respondents (68 percent) indicated that they watched by themselves.

The sample is split fairly evenly in terms of attitudes towards AFKN. About half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with statements asserting that AFKN features "too much

crime, sex, and violence," that the programs "overemphasize luxury and extravagance," and that some "are harmful to Korean students." Close to two-thirds (63 percent) agreed that AFKN programs "show life as it really is in the U.S." Interestingly, none of these attitudes is related to amount of AFKN viewing.

Results

We examined the relationship between amount of AFKN viewing and students' conceptions of social reality in two major areas: marriage and family, and sex-role attitudes. Several other discrete items which did not fit into any neat category were also examined. All were designed to reflect possible tensions between Western and traditional Korean values; specifically, they attempt to measure whether respondents support the more "liberal" American perspectives available to them through AFKN or the more "conservative" Korean views. Response categories were five-point Likert scales, from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" with "no opinion" as the midpoint.

Five items concerned students' orientations towards marriage and the family. Examples include "It is only natural that we should obey our parents all of the time" and "The Korean family system is better than the American family system." The associations between these variables and amount of AFKN viewing are shown in Table 1.

Overall, those who watch more U.S. programs on AFKN are significantly less likely to agree that obeying parents all the time is "natural" and significantly less likely to want a traditional "match-making" marriage. The other three variables

show no relationships for the sample as a whole. Analysis of partial correlations controlling for various demographics revealed that only sex reduced the magnitude of the simple correlations. Given that, along with the finding that females are more likely to be heavy AFKN viewers, we examined the relationships separately for males and females.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

When broken down by sex, the resulting patterns become somewhat complex but extremely interesting. In general, those who spend more time watching AFKN are less likely to endorse traditional perspectives and behaviors. The relationships, however, tend to be inconsistent for males and much stronger for females, despite the somewhat surprising finding that (at least in American terms) females are more "progressive" and "liberal" while males are more "traditional" and "conservative". (In the United States, males are less likely to be "conventional"; see Weigel and Jessor, 1973). Yet while Korean females overall are sharply and significantly less likely than males to endorse strict adherence to traditional norms about <u>obeying</u> parents (46 percent vs. 72 percent) and more likely to object to the idea of an arranged marriage (63 percent vs. 50 percent), they remain more likely than males to uphold certain "moral" perspectives, such as the belief that unrestricted dating is unethical (64 percent vs. 51 percent), or the perceived importance of <u>discussing</u> dating with parents (59 percent vs. 40 percent).

In most of these cases, however, AFKN viewing seems to be more strongly related to females' perspectives, in a direction

away from the traditional values. At the same time, males who watch more AFKN are more likely to agree that the "Korean family system is better," an item which shows no association at all among females. Thus, while AFKN may cultivate some grudging acceptance of non-traditional values for males, it may also sharpen their opposition to what they perceive to be inadequacies in the American family. For females, who are clearly more disposed to breaking with the traditions, greater AFKN viewing seems to intensify those predispositions, but not to the point of explicitly disavowing the Korean family system.

Somewhat similar patterns are found in Table 2, which shows the relationship between amount of AFKN viewing and attitudes about sex-roles. Items include "Husbands should do some household chores like cooking, cleaning the house, and washing dishes," and "Married women should be able to work outside the home if they want." While these propositions are by no means universally accepted in the United States, they are strongly in opposition to traditional Korean role proscriptions.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Overall, those who watch more AFKN-TV are more likely to take more "liberal" positions on these sex-role attitudes. The within-group analysis, arever, shows much weaker associations, indicating that sex accounts for most of these relationships. In other words, females are more "liberal" and watch more AFKN; controlling for sex greatly reduces the observed associations.

Females are more likely to "strongly agree" that husbands should do household chores (27 percent compared to 3 percent of males), that married women should be able to work (66 percent vs. 12 percent), and to support the women's movement in Korea (22 percent vs. 3 percent). For males, support of traditional roles has its limits; males are slightly more likely than females to believe that women should share dating expenses (a belief which is positively related to AFKN viewing). As a group, females show virtually no associations between these variables and their level of AFKN viewing. The relationships for males, while relatively small, are all positive.

Still, these data may be consistent with the notion of "mainstreaming" (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980, 1982), which holds that heavy viewing may serve to increase the homogeneity of otherwise disparate FKN;ps. Females are in near-agreement in their "liberal" views about sex-roles regardless of amount of viewing, but on three of the four questions males who watch more show some convergence towards the female position. These relationships are also much stronger among Buddhist students who, as light viewers, are far less likely to espouse such "liberal" beliefs.

Relationships between amount of AFKN viewing and several other dependent variables, concerning western and traditional values and behaviors, are shown in Table 3.[1] The patterns are highly congruent with those observed above for attitudes towards marriage and the family. As a group, females are predisposed to thinking and behaving in certain "non-traditional" ways -- e.g., to like rock 'n' roll music, to wear jeans, and to believe

Confucianism is an "old-fashioned philosophy that should not be important any more" -- and the more AFKN they watch, the more they endorse such statements.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

On the other hand, males who watch more AFKN are more concerned that "Western culture might reduce Korea's cultural uniqueness." As is the case with their support for the Korean family system (above), exposure to AFKN among males may serve to heighten perceptions of undesirable consequences and risks of cultural dissipation, rather than providing them with "Western" conceptions of social reality. (Moreover, males who watch more AFKN are significantly more likely to believe that "Korean students are becoming more liberal in dating and fashion," a phenomenon about which we may speculate they disapprove.)

Discussion

What, then, might we conclude about the impact of U.S. television programs on viewers in a different culture? First, we must note striking differences for males and females, both in terms of how much they watch and in the implications of their viewing. Females are far more likely than males to endorse relatively non-traditional Korean viewpoints regarding roles, norms, and values. In some cases, those females who watch more are even more "liberal," while in others (i.e., for sex-role attitudes) viewing makes no difference.

For males, greater AFKN viewing goes with (and may heighten) an intensely protective attitude towards Korean culture; for example, males who watch more are more likely to favor the Korean over the American family system, and more likely to be believe that Western culture might "reduce Korea's cultural uniqueness." It is arguable that their relative "conservatism" filters their interpretation of AFKN content in a way that leads them to perceive U.S. culture as more threatening and dangerous and to increase their attachments to the traditions. At the same time, although males generally show weaker associations between amount of AFKN viewing and their attitudes than do females, the relationships are generally in the same direction. All this suggests that, as in the United States, the contributions of U.S. programs abroad are not likely to be uniform across the population.

Of course, these data are cross-sectional, so no inferences about the direction of causality can be made. It is quite likely that those students who are more western-oriented will watch more AFKN in order to learn more about Western ways. This may explain why females, who are more progressive than males, watch more. Indeed, our entire sample -- college students who are learning English -- can be considered to be unusually western-oriented, and that in itself may explain the results found here. We believe, however, that these relationships are likely to be dynamic and reciprocal: certain predispositions may lead to greater AFKN viewing, but greater viewing will consolidate and amplify the new norms and values.

In sum, within the clear limitations of our sample and our measures, our findings do suggest that American programs are contributing to the Westernization of traditional cultures. The relationships are not enormous, but they are consistently in the direction of more "progressive" outlooks, even when they go with greater explicit adherence to traditional beliefs. Given cultural differences, what may a conservative force in one setting may be liberalizing in another. In other words, television's portrayals may be conservative in the context of the United States (Gerbner et al., 1982), but they may be extremely non-traditional elsewhere. As American television continues to "tighten its grip on the world" (Caranicas, 1984), diverse cultural traditions and values may become increasingly difficult to maintain.

FOOTNOTE

1. Several other variables, not shown on Table 3, were included in the questionnaire, and produced mixed results. AFKN viewing is not related to students' attitudes toward the legalization of marijuana (most respondents favored strict laws). In all subgroups, heavy AFKN viewers are slightly more likely to believe that "Homosexuals should be allowed to speak publicly about homosexuality," although few relationships are significant. Finally, heavy AFKN viewers are more likely to agree that the U.S. has more crime than Korea, significantly in most groups.

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TABLE 1

Amount of AFKN Viewing and Attitudes towards Marriage and Family

		MALES			FEMALES		
	Simple r	% Light	% Heavy	Partial r	% Light	% Heavy	Partial r
It is natural to obey parents all the time	-.23**	69	48	-.18*	53	41	-.17*
Korean family system better than American	-.00	68	81	.19*	64	64	.04
Disagree: Want a Match-making marriage	.13*	47	55	.00	51	71	.18*
Unrestricted dating is unethical	-.04	54	48	-.08	70	60	-.09
Important to discuss dating with parents	.01	54	48	-.14	66	55	-.19*

* $p<.05$ ** $p<.001$

Correlations based on continuous data; within-sex partials control for age and whether R is Buddhist

TABLE 2

Amount of AFKN Viewing and Sex-Role Attitudes

		MALES			FEMALES		
	Simple r	% Light	% Heavy	Partial r	% Light	% Heavy	Partial r
Husbands should do household chores	.19**	65	74	.08	91	90	.10
Married women should be able to work	.17**	78	79	.03	98	97	.14
Women should share dating expenses	.08	76	86	.15*	87	92	.07
Approval of Women's Movement in Korea	.13*	45	52	.14	80	78	.02

* $p<.05$ ** $p<.01$

Correlations based on continuous data; within-sex partials control for age and whether R is Buddhist

TABLE 3

Amount of AFKN Viewing and Other Attitudes

		MALES			FEMALES		
	Simple r	% Light	% Heavy	Partial r	% Light	% Heavy	Partial r
Like Rock 'n' Roll Music	.10	52	55	.03	56	74	.21*
Mostly or often wear jeans	.27**	8	17	.15	20	40	.33**
Confucianism is old-fashioned and unimportant	.15**	8	7	.08	14	19	.18*
Western culture might reduce Korea's cultural uniqueness	-.02	72	88	.20*	67	70	.07

* $p<.05$ ** $p<.001$

Correlations based on continuous data; within-sex partials control for age and whether R is Buddhist